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The Castle of Otranto

**by Horace Walpole
1764**

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The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole

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The Castle of Otranto is regarded as the first Gothic novel, a genre appealing to a taste for terror and set in a remote past when prodigies and magic can be imagined to have existed, with violent contrasts between purity and ungoverned passions. The author represents the tale as having been translated from a black letter Italian volume of the 15th century but describing much earlier events. This fictional antiquity and the depiction of mysterious wonders, dark subterranean passages, fearsome apparitions, marvelous coincidences, and especially a savage threat to spotless innocence are all typical of this genre, which does not assure a reader of a happy ending.

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